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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
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Item 2 (a)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF
GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO
ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS:
ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

Introductory statement made by the Secretary-General of the Conference at the third session of the Preparatory Committee

We begin this critically important Plenary of the third session of the Preparatory Committee on an especially auspicious note with the presence of our distinguished Secretary-General. I join with you, Mr. Chairman, and I know with all delegates and participants in expressing my gratitude for the honour he pays us by participating in this opening session and for the wise, timely and encouraging statement he has just delivered to us. I want, too, to take this opportunity to extend my special gratitude for the deep personal interest he has taken in UNCED from its inception and for the leadership, the guidance and the support he has consistently provided to me and to all of my colleagues who serve him in the UNCED secretariat.

I cannot stress too strongly the critical importance of this third substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, coming as it does just nine months before the Conference itself in June 1992. At this session we move decisively from analysis and discussion of issues to the definition and

shaping of the concrete actions which this Committee will be recommending to the Conference. I am greatly encouraged by the progress that the Working Groups have been making during the past two weeks in this respect, and the workmanlike way they have been addressing the important and complex issues with which they are charged. We will need to emerge from this session with specific guidance and direction from the Committee on each of the actions it expects to recommend to the Conference, so that the additional work required in respect of each of them can be done, and the proposals presented in a form which will facilitate final decisions by the Preparatory Committee at its last session to be held in New York in March 1992. All such work will have to be completed by December 1991 to ensure that documents will be available well before the fourth session.

Documentation for this session of the Preparatory Committee and its Working Groups is extensive, complex and, I am sorry to say, late in getting to you. I apologize for this and can only say that our secretariat, our partners from within the United Nations system and elsewhere, and the translation services all made utmost efforts to produce documents which would respond to the many requests you made of us and ensure that you have before you the information, analyses and options you require for the important decisions you must take at this session. This proved to be a Herculean task in the relatively brief period available since the end of the second session of the Preparatory Committee last April. We also recognize that the state of the work reflected in the documents is still uneven and in some areas a good deal of further work and refinement remains to be done.

Preparations for the 1992 Conference are taking place in a period of unprecedented change in the relationships amongst people and nations as well as our relations with the Earth as our common home. The ending of the Cold War has opened up a new era of international cooperation. Real progress is now being made towards the long frustrated dreams of disarmament. But as the risks of global war between the super-Powers has receded, long-simmering ethnic, religious and regional conflicts have re-emerged as threats to peace and security, and to the integrity of nations. The Gulf war provided a sobering reminder of the potential of such regional conflicts to undermine world peace and security. It also provided a tragic example of how the environment can be both an instrument and a victim of warfare. It is clear that much strengthened measures to prevent deliberate damage to the environment as an instrument of war must be put in place and that environmental security must be included in the system of regional security arrangements that is such a high priority for the world community in the period ahead.

The revitalization of multilateralism in the field of peace-making and peace-keeping opens up new prospects for both environmental and development cooperation. For conflict is the enemy of both environment and development. The resolution of long-standing regional conflicts in developing countries is essential to the revitalization of their development as well as their full participation in international environmental cooperation.

Nowhere is this more critical than in sub-Saharan Africa where recurring famine is the most dramatic manifestation of structural poverty and persistent

hunger. Yet the urgent and acute needs of the least-developed countries of Africa have receded to the margins of world attention at the very time when they need and deserve high priority.

But we know that hunger and malnutrition exist in many countries, even when there is plenty of food in the markets. Over 15 per cent of the world's population does not get enough to eat to lead a full, healthy and productive life. This persistent hunger will be relieved not by emergency food supplies but by development - the kind of development that brings the poor and hungry into the income stream. The 1992 Conference provides a unique opportunity to revitalize development through the integration of environment and development, speed the reduction of poverty and the achievement of food security through the integration of environment and development and strengthening of the multilateral system of support for sustainable development. It can also give rise to a substantial shift in global priorities for the allocation of resources so as to ensure that developing countries will have access to the additional means they require to revitalize their development on an environmentally-sustainable basis.

The need to achieve a full integration of environment with development is at the heart of General Assembly resolution 44/228 which established the mandate for the 1992 Conference and has been the primary concern of this Preparatory Committee and of your secretariat. This concern, together with the guidance and direction we received from the Preparatory Committee at its second session, have determined our priorities in preparing the documentation for this session. Critical development issues like poverty, food security, population, production and consumption patterns, have been addressed and important programmatic initiatives identified. Strong evidence has been presented as to the efficacy of economic instruments in providing positive incentives to sustainable development and as to the need to resolve major policy issues in the field of international finance and trade as they affect sustainable development.

And proposals have been presented for dealing with the key issues of new and additional concessional financial resources and technology transfer and capacity building as well as for possible changes in the institutional mechanisms for dealing with environment and development, and their integration within the United Nations system.

In respect of each of the subjects being dealt with by Working Groups I and II, a series of "Options for Agenda 21" were presented, together with a background analysis in each case. These provided the basis for consideration of each of these subjects in the meetings of the two Working Groups that have been taking place here during the first two weeks. The programme areas, as they are finally defined and agreed by the Preparatory Committee, will provide the "building blocks" for Agenda 21 as the programme of action to be submitted to the Conference. The framework and format for presentation of the Agenda 21 action programme have already been discussed to some extent in Working Groups I and II, but the guidance of this Plenary will be of particular importance.

I have been asked what we should expect by way of results from this third substantive session of the Preparatory Committee. The answer is: a very great deal indeed! More explicitly, let me suggest the progress I believe must be

made in each of the six major areas the Conference will be addressing if the preparatory process is to be completed in the limited time now available before the Conference:

1. The Earth Charter

Decisions will need to be taken on the basic nature and form of this instrument and a significant degree of consensus reached on the specific elements to be included in it. The discussions on what it is to be called will also, I trust, provide the basis for a decision on this at the final session. We can be encouraged by the good progress that Working Group III is making on this key aspect of the Conference based on proposals put forth by Governments.

2. Agenda 21

This, as the action programme of the Conference, will be addressed to Governments, to the agencies, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, and the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which will be involved, in various ways, in its implementation. I am pleased that the Working Groups have already made such good progress in negotiating the contents of Agenda 21, while leaving final decisions to be made at the fourth session when information on costing and further work on the cross-sectoral dimensions will have been completed. As a minimum, by the end of this session, a substantial degree of consensus will need to be reached on the specific action elements to be included in Agenda 21. It will encompass all the programme areas being considered by Working Groups I and II, a legal agenda resulting from the work of Working Group III, as well as the cross-sectoral issues to be considered here in the Plenary. Population and gender issues, which constitute an important dimension in the integration of environment and development in respect of virtually all Agenda 21 issues, need to be considered in this context.

The Committee will need to give guidance as to the further work that must be done before finalization at the fourth session. The primary task we see for the secretariat during this period is to undertake, in cooperation with our working partners, the formidable job of costing the elements of Agenda 21 and providing for the full integration with these elements of the relevant cross-sectoral dimensions.

I am sure that this Committee fully appreciates that it would not be feasible, in the brief period between the end of this Preparatory Committee session and the time, in December 1991, when documents for the final session must be completed, to undertake any significant amount of wholly new analytical work. What is needed most at this point is the guidance, direction and decision of the Preparatory Committee on those action elements which should be given most attention, which need further strengthening, refinement, re-casting and/or consolidation. It would be important, too, to hear from the Preparatory Committee as to gaps in the action proposals which need to be filled before the final session.

These action elements provided by Working Groups I and II constitute, of course, the basic content of Agenda 21. But it is also important that we obtain the guidance of the Preparatory Committee on the framework and format in which these actions are presented so as to increase their usefulness to Governments and other agencies and organizations involved in its implementation. Our proposals in this respect are set out in document A/CONF.151/PC/42 and Add.1-10.

The format we are proposing for presentation of Agenda 21 is one which will permit articulation of broad goals and, within these, more specific targets, to which the individual programme areas will contribute. Document A/CONF.151/PC/42 and Add.1-10 contain some suggestions as to these broad or "global" goals and the individual actions can be presented in such a manner as to demonstrate the extent to which they contribute towards such goals. This is one of the ways in which the adequacy and efficacy of the individual actions can be judged.

I attach particular importance to the articulation of these global goals as they must set the direction for the manifold activities that will need to be undertaken following the Earth Summit to give effect to its decisions. It would, of course, be unrealistic to expect that the specific programme area options called for in Agenda 21 will take us all the way towards achieving these goals. Yet they must be formulated to constitute concrete and substantial steps which will move the world community decisively and solidly towards these larger goals. We must establish a credible programme which will give the people of the world sound hope for a more secure and sustainable future. It would be important for the Preparatory Committee at this session to provide guidance in respect of these global goals and their incorporation into Agenda 21.

3. Financial resources

The ideas as to financial needs, potential sources of the additional funds required to meet them and possible mechanisms for mobilizing and administering them, as outlined in document A/CONF.151/PC/51, are designed to provide the basis for discussion of this very important set of issues. While it is not expected that these issues will be resolved at this session, it is extremely important that they be the subject of significant discussion and negotiation from which clear indications will emerge as to the areas in which the preparatory work should concentrate prior to the final session of the Preparatory Committee.

4. Transfer of technology

As you will note from document A/CONF.151/PC/53, a good deal of progress has been made in respect of this important issue and a number of options for action are offered for your consideration. I attach particular importance to the proposal for a major new programme of "capacity building" in developing countries to

support their efforts to strengthen their institutional and human resource capacities, to choose, develop, adapt and use the environmentally-sound technologies they require to make the transition to sustainable development. This is also discussed in the document on Financial Resources (A/CONF.151/PC/51). The guidance and direction of the Preparatory Committee in the further elaboration of this and other action proposals in respect of technology transfer and cooperation will be necessary to ensure the completion of an acceptable "action package" in this critical area.

5. Institutions

On the basis that "form follows function", final recommendations by the Preparatory Committee in respect of institutional change will necessarily follow from its consideration of the other issues which give rise to the need for such changes. Nevertheless, a number of patterns are already emerging from our ongoing work, and from the dialogue on restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations going on outside of the UNCED process. The proposals outlined in document A/CONF.151/PC/80 were designed to provide the basis for this consideration. The discussions in Working Group III on this important issue and any further guidance that may emerge from this Plenary session will contribute significantly to the process of narrowing the options that must now take place.

The role of regional institutions, particularly the United Nations regional economic commissions and the regional development banks, will be of particular importance in the integration of environment and development and implementation of Agenda 21. And, of course, the primary purpose of international institutions at both global and regional levels is to serve and support national institutional structures. However, these extremely important issues are not addressed in document A/CONF.151/PC/80 as the recommendations the Preparatory Committee may wish to consider in respect of them will flow to a considerable extent from the results of the regional preparatory conferences, which are not yet completed, and analysis of national reports.

The recommendations of the Preparatory Committee in respect of institutional change must be framed in the context of the need for a new multilateralism where partnership amongst Governments replaces hegemony, mutual obligation replaces one-sided conditionality, and new means are found to give effect to the critically important contributions of non-governmental organizations to this process. These recommendations will also need to be linked with the broader efforts now under way to restructure and improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system. The environment and development issues being addressed by the 1992 Conference relate to most of the issues on the economic and social agenda of the United Nations and increasingly bear as well on its security and human rights agendas. Thus, the actions taken by the Conference on institutional matters can make an extremely important contribution to the overall task of reforming and strengthening the United Nations as the centrepiece of

the emerging system of democratic global governance. This clearly challenges the Preparatory Committee to be especially innovative and far-sighted in the institutional changes it recommends to the Conference.

One question that has arisen is whether actions on finance, technology and institutions are to be treated as part of Agenda 21. As we see it, these issues flow directly from the establishment of needs and the mechanisms for meeting these needs that is an integral part of the process of considering each of the elements of Agenda 21. However, as the issues of finance, technology and institutions go beyond the mere aggregation of needs and mechanisms identified in respect of each of the individual elements of Agenda 21, they require broader consideration on a more integrated basis. This is, I understand, the reason why the Preparatory Committee agreed that each of these key issues should receive separate attention on its agenda. If the Preparatory Committee decides to continue to give these issues their own place on the agenda at Rio, this would not prevent it from also deciding to incorporate them into Agenda 21. In any event, they must necessarily be very closely integrated with Agenda 21.

6. Conventions

The Preparatory Committee will, I am sure, be pleased to note the encouraging progress now being made in negotiations on the proposed conventions on climate change and biological diversity. While both these negotiating groups face an intensive and demanding timetable, I am greatly encouraged by the prospect that they will produce framework conventions for signature in Rio. I very much hope that these will be supplemented by agreed principles that can provide the basis for future negotiations of more specific undertakings in the form of protocols. This would mark an extremely important milestone in the cooperative efforts of the world community to deal effectively with two of the most important and urgent global environment and development concerns.

I am encouraged, too, that the progress being made in Working Group II on principles in respect of forestry will provide the basis for agreed recommendations by the Preparatory Committee at its final session for action by the Conference on this critically important issue.

You will need, at this session, to focus your attention on the agenda and work programme for the Conference itself. I am pleased to say that in Brazil preparations for hosting the Conference continue to proceed extremely well. The Government of Brazil, with the full cooperation of the State and City governments of Rio de Janeiro, has established a very effective organization which is now well advanced in its task of preparing the Conference facilities at the Rio Centre and putting in place the multitude of other arrangements necessary to welcome and accommodate the participants in the Conference and the many thousands of others who will stream into Rio for related events. UNCED represents a mammoth undertaking, certainly the largest and most complex conference challenge ever. And it could not be in better hands. I am pleased and deeply grateful for the fine cooperation of our Brazilian hosts and am fully confident that the arrangements they are making for the Conference will

be of unsurpassed quality and fully in accord with the importance of its purposes and the unique and historic nature of this first ever "Earth Summit".

You will be considering the suggestions made in A/CONF.151/PC/56 concerning the agenda and programme of work at the Conference itself. It would also be very helpful in terms of preparing for the Conference itself if the organization of work for the final session of the Preparatory Committee followed closely the pattern to be adopted in Rio. Accordingly, I would suggest for the consideration of the Preparatory Committee that the programme of work for its fourth and final session, to be held in New York from 9 March to 3 April 1992, provide for:

- (a) Agenda 21 to be considered on an integrated basis in joint meetings of Working Groups I and II. These joint meetings would consider all Agenda 21 actions including those arising from the cross-sectoral issues;
- (b) Legal, institutional and related cross-sectoral issues to be dealt with by Working Group III, as already mandated;
- (c) Financial resources, technology transfer, institutional issues and economic issues in a general sense to be dealt with by the plenary, taking account of work done on these issues in the other Working Groups and closely related to Agenda 21.

Since this Committee met in its second session here in April, interest in the Conference has grown, expectations as to its results have been heightened and there has been a rapid acceleration in the momentum of the preparatory process. There has been an explosion in the number of events feeding into it.

This has been underscored by the high priority accorded to the 1992 Conference by the OAU at its Summit in Abuja in June, at the G-7 Summit in London in July, at the Conference of Ministers from Developing Countries in Beijing in June, the meeting of Ministers from francophone countries in Tunis in April, the Eco-Asia '91 Conference in Tokyo in July, and the meeting in June of Ministers from the ECE region in Prague. The African Regional Preparatory Conference which took place in Cairo, Egypt, last month, a special report of which will be made to the Committee, made an extremely important contribution to the preparatory process from the African perspective. This was accompanied by a meeting of the NGO Forum organized by the Centre for Our Common Future and supplemented by the creation of the UNCED '92 African NGO coordination group as well as by the results of a seminar of African scientists held shortly following the Cairo meeting in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. And on World Environment Day a very special ceremony was held in Stockholm at which Prime Minister Carlsson of Sweden "passed the torch" to President Collor of Brazil symbolizing the link between Stockholm and Rio.

The calendar of meetings in the period between now and the Conference itself is a crowded one. The final in the series of United Nations regional preparatory conferences will take place for the ESCWA region in Cairo in September. Other key meetings include an African ministerial meeting in Abidjan being held in cooperation with the African Development Bank, the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet in Miami, a Conference on integrating

environment and economic policies in Hamburg, Pacem in Maribus in Lisbon, the Conference on Environment and Development - From Concept to Action in the Hague, Netherlands, the Conference of the International Council of Scientific Unions on an "Agenda of Science for Environment and Development into the 21st Century" (ASCEND 21) in Vienna in November, the OECD Joint Meeting of Aid and Development Ministers in Paris in December, the Environment and Development NGOs Meeting to be hosted by the French Government in Paris in December, the UNIDO International Conference on Ecologically Sustainable Industrial Development in Copenhagen in October, the International Water Conference in Dublin in January 1992, to name but a few.

I am especially pleased to report that Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, as former Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, has agreed to convene a special meeting of the former Members of her Commission early in 1992 to consider the issues to be addressed by the 1992 Conference from the perspective of the recommendations of the Brundtland Commission.

I am pleased to say that we have already received 40 national reports and some 50 other countries have given us firm dates for receipt of their reports. As you know, they will provide an exceptionally important input to the preparatory process and to ensure this it is most important that all national reports be in our hands as soon as possible.

All of this is encouraging but, I have to say, not sufficient to ensure that Governments will be fully prepared to take the important decisions they will be expected to take in Rio in 1992. The professional work of the Secretariat and its working partners and the broad range of contributions being received from other intergovernmental and non-governmental sources are important elements in the preparatory process. But their purpose is to support the process of consideration, negotiation and decision-making by Governments. This process is the exclusive domain and responsibility of Governments and while it is the role of the Secretariat to support Governments in this process, it cannot substitute for them.

The Preparatory Committee, with its Working Groups, has done a commendable job to date in dealing with the complex array of subject matter mandated to it by General Assembly resolution 44/228. But only nine months remain now before the Conference. And if the Committee is to take the important decisions expected of it, particularly given that it is to be a summit-level conference, there must, in my view, be a substantial acceleration in the processes of deliberation, consultation and negotiation by Governments in the period ahead. It is gratifying to note in the deliberations of the Working Groups at this session the strong and positive engagement of government representatives in this process.

It would not seem to be feasible to introduce another session of the Preparatory Committee into the current timetable. But we must continue the search for consensus on the issues between sessions. This might best be done through an acceleration of informal consultations amongst Governments. Some of these might be carried out at ministerial level.

There is a growing interest on the part of the public and media in the Earth Summit. In cooperation with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations we have been developing plans and fostering initiatives designed to produce a broad dissemination of information about the Conference and its purposes to people throughout the world, including a number of special television and radio programmes, publications, background articles and news features. Special arrangements are being put in place to ensure global media coverage of the Conference itself. The cooperation of the organizers of Earth Day has been enlisted so that Earth Day in April 1992 will be devoted to eliciting the interest and commitment of people throughout the world to the Earth Summit and its purposes. We have also been fortunate to secure the assistance as a Goodwill Ambassador of Mr. Edson Arantes do Nascimento, better known to the world as "Pele", the world-renowned Brazilian soccer star, who will be inviting his many millions of fans to join the "Earth Team" for Rio. Other stars from the fields of sports, media and the arts are also volunteering to help spread the word about the Earth Summit. And we are designating a number of Youth Ambassadors to evoke the interest and participation of young people. Thus, the interest, the attention and the voices of the people of the world can be expected to provide a strong and active base for the Summit Conference of their leaders when they gather in Rio in June 1992.

The cooperation extended to us by our partners in the other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system continues to be exemplary. Indeed, the Working Parties that have been established at the secretariat level with participation of representatives of the principal members of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and experts, have contributed immensely to the efficacy and cooperative nature of our preparatory work. It provides an extremely promising basis for future cooperation in implementation of the decisions of the 1992 Conference.

I want to extend a special thanks to the agencies, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system for their help and support to our secretariat in so many ways and, in particular, to those which have seconded personnel to us: UNDP, UNFPA, UNIFEM and WHO.

The extensive work carried out by our ad hoc secretariat has been made possible by extrabudgetary contributions from a number of Governments, Foundations and others directly to the UNCED Trust Fund for Preparatory Activities as well as those which have contributed to ECOFUND '92, the non-profit organization established especially to support preparations for the Conference. A complete list of those which have provided and/or pledged their support in various ways will be presented in a Conference Room document, but I want here to acknowledge my deep gratitude to each of them.

Particularly encouraging is the proliferation of activities by non-governmental organizations and citizen groups in every region of the world. This will be reflected in the much larger number of NGO representatives, particularly for developing countries participating in meetings of this session of the Preparatory Committee and its Working Groups. The secretariat has, as it was urged to do by this Committee, lent its full support to efforts to mobilize financial support for the participation by

developing country NGOs, youth and indigenous peoples in the preparatory process and in meetings of this Committee. We appreciate the assistance that has been forthcoming for this purpose from Canada, Denmark and Norway. But the overall level of support has still not been sufficient to have as many representatives of developing country NGOs here as we had hoped. We will continue our efforts to obtain such funding and would strongly urge Governments and others to contribute the additional funds required to meet this important need.

I am pleased to say that the decision taken by the Preparatory Committee at its last session to issue a special invitation to indigenous peoples to give the Preparatory Committee the benefit of their unique perceptions and experience has elicited a promising and cooperative response. But much more is required if they are to make their full contribution to the Conference and its preparations. The Business Council for Sustainable Development has mounted a broad range of activities in support of the Conference, of which we will be hearing a report during this session. The Second World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM II), which met in Rotterdam in May, endorsed the Business Charter for Sustainable Development adopted by the International Chamber of Commerce, and adopted a series of other proposals which constitute an important contribution by the business community to preparations for 1992. And the trade unions, particularly through the ICFTU, are actively organizing to make their critically important contribution to Conference preparations, as are other key organizations representing world religions, science, educators, women, youth and children, and professional groups of all disciplines.

Many action pathways are thus converging on the road to Rio de Janeiro and many constituencies and sectors are making their distinctive contributions to the preparatory process. The net result will be much more than the mere sum of the myriads of suggestions and action proposals that will be assimilated into the recommendations that the Committee will be making to the Conference. They will add up to a new chapter of human history, one which can establish the foundations for the new era of peace, security, justice and democratic governance to which the Earth Summit must give rise.

This will include concrete measures and incentives to reduce the negative environmental impacts of the rich, to revitalize development in the developing countries, eliminate the pervasive poverty and reduce unsustainable rates of population growth which threaten both their development and the environment. It will be based on the premise that sustainable development is not just an option but an imperative, in both environmental and development terms and that while the transition to sustainable development will be difficult, it is entirely feasible. It will require a major shift in priorities for Governments and people involving the full integration of the environmental dimension into economic and sectoral policies and decision-making in every sphere of activities and a major redeployment of human and financial resources at both national and international levels.

The end of the Cold War and the restructuring of military relationships and budgets provide a unique opportunity to effect these shifts while at the same time providing greater security in real terms. What has long been an elusive prospect is now a possible dream. But it can only come about through a new global partnership embracing rich and poor, North, South, East and West, on the basis of common interest, mutual need, shared responsibilities and benefits. To forge the basis for this new global partnership is, I submit, the primary challenge for this Committee. It is this larger vision which I know will inspire your work at this crucially important session when you must take so many of the decisions needed to translate this dream into a reality.
